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AUTHOR Massey, T. Benjamin
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ABSTRACT

Two questions are addressed: (1) How can existing organizational structures and practices be developed where none have previously existed? The phenomenon of the adult postsecondary student is a fundamental demographic shift not initiated by the institutions but to which they must nonetheless respond. The organizational structure of the University of Maryland University College is examined as a model. University College enrolls students in Maryland and in 17 foreign countries, specializing in flexible curricula and schedules for the B.A. and B.S. degrees, associate degrees, certificates, and a graduate degree in human resources administration. All undergraduate students are admitted as special students and may change status on completion of 15 hours with a C average. The two delivery methods are credit programs and a conferences and institutes division. The student services unit is geared to providing convenient, accessible services for admissions, registration, advisement, library, articulation, recruitment, financial aid, and veterans. Faculty are selected on the basis of their interest in teaching part-time students. The politics of the 30-year transition to the current system are examined. (MSE)

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INTERNAL ORGANIZATION TO SERVE PART-TIME STUDENT NEEDS

T. Benjamin Massey
Conference on "Adjusting Postsecondary American Education to the Part-time, Adult Student"
Pennsylvania State University, July 10-11, 1979

If the answer is "Internal Organization to Serve Part-time Student Needs," what is the question?

There are, of course, several questions. One is, how can existing organizational structures and practices be converted to serve a new clientele in postsecondary education? A related question would be, by what means can new organizational structures be developed where none have previously existed?

Several of the issues raised by these questions challenge our present operating assumptions about higher education to an almost alarming extent. In anticipation of no easy transition, some of us may be seduced into Utopian daydreaming about what the Simple Survival Kit for the new era in postsecondary education might contain:

1 visionary chief institutional officer
a staff of visionary administrators and academic department heads
an innovative, dedicated and visionary faculty
a visionary board of trustees
other visionary governing bodies, as required
a realistic and visionary accrediting association
an indulgent, generous and visionary state legislature and, finally,
patient, if not visionary, students

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The New Era in Perspective

In my judgment, it has been established that we are entering a new era, whose implications we can appreciate by understanding where we came from. In their historical evolution, American colleges and universities, land-grant institutions in particular, at one time or another have been expected to be many things to many people. The university has been considered a research resource for the Government, a force in gaining public acceptance for new social policies, an agency unofficially charged with legitimizing new professions, a brain trust for solutions to community problems, and, as in the late 60's, a backdrop for the demonstration of public indignation.

Not until our own generation, however, did the character of the postsecondary student body change significantly. For more than 300 years higher education has been designed to prepare young people for an enlightened and productive adulthood. (Parenthetically, in the recent half century, the emphasis more and more has been on "productive.") Finally, at the end of the Second World War, the American university added to its other functions that of providing a reward for returning soldiers, and for the first time on a large scale "integration" came to the university in the form of non-traditional students. Historian Rosemary Park has observed that the educational provisions of the GI Bill could be seen as " . . . the culmination of an unconscious effort to make an institution of learning a national agent of democracy."[1]

Still, a noteworthy fact that has characterized postsecondary education in the United States, as elsewhere, is that the university—while not, in most cases, the community college—has always had the tacit authority to set and enforce its

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[1]"Reflections on the Business of Education in an Historical Perspective," UCLA Extension, Los Angeles, California, January 19, 1979.

own standards of eligibility for admission. Gradually, inevitably, it came to the attention of the public that distinct groups of people had in effect been excluded from higher education. A proportionately small number of minority students were enrolled in postsecondary institutions, and there were few women in graduate and professional schools. Older persons were under-represented at all levels, and those needing recurrent education were not being served. We are doing better these days. But the point is that colleges and universities, though not unmoved by public pressure and resultant legislation, have essentially elected to extend their educational opportunities to these groups.

The phenomenon we are witnessing now, the one which prompts this conference, is something altogether different, a fundamental demographic shift that we have not initiated but to which we must respond by adapting our structures and practices. In the next decade, older students, almost all of whom are likely to be part-time students, may in numbers equal or exceed younger, full-time students as postsecondary education's clientele. Fiscal necessity apart, failure to gear postsecondary institutions to the needs of the new age group would be to suppose that higher education has something other than a symbiotic relationship with the society of which it is a part.

Gray Areas in the Graying of the Campus

The advent of the new era poses a watershed for the continuing education units of postsecondary institutions, whose primary mission has been to serve younger, full-time students. Once adult, part-time students become a majority or near-majority, what will be the role of what we have been calling the "continuing education" component of the institution? Since many continuing education divisions have for years been doing what everyone is now beginning to talk about, these organizations could be viewed as a vanguard. However, if demography eventually necessitates their dissolution as discrete operating units, there may

not, among other things, be the mechanism whereby educators who have had experience with adult students may impart that experience to their as yet less sensitized colleagues, or otherwise participate in the transition.

To an extent, then, and in the absence of a Simple Survival Kit, we can't entirely know how institutions will organize to serve the new clientele in the next few decades and therefore what eventualities we should be preparing ourselves for. While there is the question, what kind of internal organization does advantage part-time students, from the perspective of some of us it may be subordinated to the question of how continuing education units will interface with other campus components as service to older, part-time students becomes the institution-wide mandate.

Continuing Education at the University of Maryland

With these caveats, I would like to discuss relevant organization structures and practices of my own campus, University of Maryland University College which, as the continuing education component of the University of Maryland, can be considered one model. I will conclude with a few observations about the politics of the interface I have mentioned. What part-time students need, and how University of Maryland University College has endeavored to provide it, might be approached from the standpoint of several considerations: curricula, admission criteria, accessibility of offerings, related services, and characteristics of faculty.

To provide an organizational frame of reference, let me mention that University College is the second largest of the five campuses of the University of Maryland, enrolling over 20,000 students annually throughout the State. Parenthetically, I should note that we also offer degree programs at overseas locations in 17 countries, primarily for members of the U.S. Armed Forces and

their families. The term "campus" is in some ways misleading, since our physical plant consists solely of a residential conference center located on the periphery of the University's College Park Campus. This center houses the central administrative offices of University College.

Curricula

Preferring to think that it has been descriptive rather than prescriptive, University College offers its own BA and BS degrees which are designed to incorporate flexibility while retaining the strengths of more traditional bachelor's degrees. In the 120 semester hour Bachelor of Arts or Science, the student completes primary and secondary areas of concentration totaling a minimum of 42 semester hours and thus is permitted not only a high degree of choice in constituting the major areas of academic work, but also an opportunity to specialize in two closely complementing disciplines. The baccalaureate curriculum recognizes credit by examination as well as experiential learning that meets carefully developed criteria. In applying degree requirements, University College attempts to accommodate to the extent possible the special needs of students whose mobility requires them to complete work at a number of institutions.

In addition to the baccalaureate, University College offers associate degrees and certificates and, as of this past fall, a graduate degree in human resources administration. Higher than anticipated enrollment in the Master of General Administration program has given us further insight into the needs of our population, and we are now developing additional graduate degree curricula.

In determining which courses and programs to offer, University College tries to achieve a balance between standard disciplines and emerging areas of cultural or occupational emphasis. While most offerings are courses that are also

available on other campuses of the University, University College does develop its own courses and curricula in response to identified needs.

At other campuses of the University as well as at off-campus locations, University College aims for an integrated schedule of offerings that articulate among themselves at each location, with University College courses at neighboring locations, and, where possible, with courses offered by other campuses of the University and by neighboring institutions. We are particularly concerned that our courses not duplicate those scheduled by other campuses and other institutions at the same hours. Articulation with community colleges is fostered through a University College Community College Advisory Council that meets semi-annually and through active cooperative efforts with individual community colleges.

In scheduling courses on other campuses of the University, University College also recognizes and attempts to fulfill the following responsibilities. First, meeting identified program needs specific to part-time students at the respective campus; second, offering on a regular and rotating basis courses that satisfy the University College General Education Requirements as well as courses that may be applied to the primary and secondary concentrations of the University College bachelor and master's degrees; and third, offering single courses or course sequences to meet specific needs of particular groups.

Admission

Since most part-time students do not intend to pursue a degree, all undergraduate University College students are initially admitted as "special" students, a status they may continue indefinitely if they meet academic retention requirements. Degree-seeking students may request a change to "regular" status upon completion of 15 semester hours of University College coursework with a "C" or better average.

Our admission requirements differentiate applicants who have been out of high school for two or more years, or who are on active military duty or veterans, from those out of high school less than two years and not servicemembers or veterans. While applicants in the latter category meet admission criteria in effect at the other campuses at the University, those in the former category are eligible for admission to University College if they have graduated from an accredited or approved high school or achieved the equivalent and have earned a cumulative "C" or better average in all previous college-level work completed. (University College is also a Servicemen's Opportunity College.)

Access

Within the overarching necessity to offer courses at times and places convenient to part-time students, the way in which the delivery of programs is organized can be expected to vary among institutions, depending on their missions. As the campus of a major state university whose mission it is to extend the educational resources of the University throughout the State and around the world to students who cannot or choose not to enroll in more traditional programs, University College offers courses throughout the State of Maryland and at military installations in Virginia and the District of Columbia. As mentioned earlier, we have also offered a range of programs for U. S. military populations in Europe since 1949 and in the Far East since 1956.

Delivery units of University College include, then, two overseas divisions and statewide divisions as follows: credit programs, including individual directorates for courses offered at other campuses of the University versus those held at off-campus locations. Credit programs as an entity also encompasses two programmatic units, the master's degree program, and the University College Open University, an adaptation of the British OU. Division directors and their assistants within statewide credit programs specialize in the logistics of

scheduling classes, with the Off-Campus Division also assuming responsibility for registering students on-site. Academic oversight of University College credit programs is provided by an undergraduate and a graduate dean and their assistants.

The other University College statewide delivery unit is the Conferences and Institutes Division which, through non-credit short courses, seminars and symposia, serves another, sometimes national or international clientele, and in terms of community service complements the offerings of the credit divisions.

Services

Another organizational unit of University College comprises student services, including admission and registration, advisement, library, articulation and recruitment, and the separate offices of financial aid and veterans' services.

Registration services are made as accessible as possible to University College students. Since our experience is that those who cannot attend classes during the day can often not readily travel to a central location to register for courses, University College "takes the University to the people" through mail, on-site, and walk-in registration services as well as through its class scheduling. Over a three-week period each semester, we conduct at hours convenient to students on-site registration, academic advisement, and financial aid, VA and other services at locations away from the University's campuses, as well as walk-in registration on the campuses. Additionally, students may, and are encouraged to, register by mail in advance of the regular registration period.

Full-time academic advisors with training and experience in working with part-time students provide, at convenient times and places, such services as evaluation of prior education and personal interviews to assist students in planning their programs of study, as well as career counseling.

Other services provided to students include the University College Writing Center, offering personalized assistance with writing problems or projects, and courses designed to provide a reorientation to academic work or the study skills important to academic (and personal) success.

University College units not included in the foregoing description are the Office of University Relations, Alumni Affairs and Development, and the Office of Computing Services. Both of these units report directly to the Chancellor, the latter by way of the Assistant to the Chancellor for Institutional Planning, Research and Development.

Faculty

It would almost be appropriate that a separate presentation within this conference address problems and issues of obtaining, retaining and in some cases orienting or retraining the faculty who teach part-time students. It would also be appropriate that I limit my comments here to a few, the first of which would be that in the setting of continuing education more so than elsewhere, the quality of teaching is, in my opinion, crucial to learning success.

Faculty appointed to teach courses for University College are recruited from other University of Maryland campuses, other postsecondary institutions, from Government, and from the private sector. They are selected on the basis of their orientation and desire to teach part-time students, and in the classroom they embody and implement our emphasis on teaching and service. Depending on the nature of their appointments, faculty may also work with the full-time academic advisors in counseling students.

University College faculty are asked to conduct student course evaluation at the conclusion of each course taught. This and other developmental activities University College sponsors for faculty reflect the stress on teaching excellence.

.Workshops and professional development projects and services are designed to introduce or provide practice in teaching strategies or to sensitize faculty to the needs of part-time students. We have our own Office of Faculty Development in addition to a Faculty Services unit.

Politics of the Transition

What I have been describing are aspects of the internal organization of the continuing education component of a large state university. It would not be inaccurate to say that University College has developed its organizational structure, procedures, and services often by trial and error, over a period of 30 years, in response to what it has perceived the needs of its students to be, largely without other than academic guidance from the more traditional campuses of the University, and sometimes in spite of them.

Though we plan and conduct our programs and services on the basis of planning goals and unit objectives, we have identified these goals on the assumption that we will continue as we are, a discrete component of the University charged with serving part-time students.

While recognizing that University College's experience may not be typical of many continuing education units, I would like to offer a few generalizations to characterize the relationship between the continuing education unit and the rest of the institution.

Perhaps more than anything, continuing education units have been neglected, left to make their own decisions about program content and management, with various results. One result is continuing education's relative lack of access to the teaching resource represented by other campus faculty, which occurs mainly because these faculty are not adequately rewarded for teaching part-time students. Teaching in continuing education programs is often viewed as a low prestige

activity, one that diverts the energy the faculty member should be devoting to research or regular campus instruction. It is also true that some faculty whose primary identification is with academic departments do not want to deal with the discontinuity inherent in part-time study or are not comfortable teaching adult students with life experience who are more inclined then their younger counterparts to challenge what is imparted to them. Necessity being the mother of invention, continuing education units have to a degree turned this disadvantage to an advantage by cultivating an adjunct faculty among professionals in the community, some of whom as practitioners are better equipped to teach certain kinds of courses to adults.

Another potential area of neglect is in the review of courses and instructors by academic departments on campus. In some institutions, department chairs simply lack the time and assistance needed for systematic monitoring of the continuing education instructional staff, which raises the issue of quality control.

In the absence of state funding for their programs, most continuing education units also tend to be left alone by those elements of an institution's administration concerned with fiscal management.

On the other hand, we see evidence of perhaps too much campus involvement in continuing education in the professional schools' increasing interest in strengthening their relationships with their professional constituencies. The growth of relicensure legislation clearly creates a need for certain programs, and we confront the decision as to whether these programs are best conducted by the continuing education unit of an institution or by the individual schools. The latter may see the programs as money-makers enabling them to augment their research funds.

Apart from the unpreparedness or willingness of some faculty to teach part-time students, there are other problems institutions may encounter if and when continuing education becomes an institution-wide responsibility. Owing to lack of orientation to the needs of part-time students by some academic departments, the selection of offerings for part-time students may become unbalanced, heavy in business and professional fields and too light in the sciences and humanities. In other words, the compartmentalization found in most postsecondary institutions would make difficult the interdisciplinary approaches that have been the strength of continuing education programs.

Too, higher costs are a likely consequence of the proliferation of administrative units that would result from programmatic decentralization in continuing education.

Increasingly, continuing education finds itself in the middle of an ideological tug-of-war between preservation of academic quality on the one side and virtual demand for the applicability of curricula to occupational and other real-life contexts on the other hand. It must be remembered that his conflict is occurring in a political setting of eroded financial support for higher education in general and for continuing education in particular.

Some continuing education units not already self-supporting have recently had state support withdrawn. This portends that the ideological struggle may finally be resolved by the part-time student consumers themselves, who can let us know with their checkbooks what kinds of programs and degrees they want. With these ironies fresh in mind, we wait breathlessly to see what kinds of enrollment-based funding formulas will be proposed and adopted in the new era of postsecondary education.

In Summary

In the foregoing discussion, I have focused on some implications of the demographic shift that will alter the postsecondary student population throughout the U.S. in the next decades, and I have suggested how institutions may need to alter their organizational structures and emphases to serve part-time students, and what difficulties the transitions might bring. These will, of course, vary from state to state and institution to institution. The sharing of ideas encouraged by this conference should assist us in maintaining or enhancing the availability and viability of high quality programs and services for the part-time, adult student. I have neglected, since I believe it is being emphasized in other sessions, the key to successful course and programs offerings: marketing! In my view, it assumes an importance second only to quality control. For too long we have been trying to build a better mousetrap, rather than assessing what it is that people want in a mousetrap, and then setting about to design and develop it.

I would welcome your questions and comments.